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Agency COVID-19 Update

Let's keep a strong defense against COVID-19.

- ◆ The past 10 months have been trying times for our communities and workplaces; in many ways we can say that we have learned a lot and changed habits to protect ourselves and loved ones. Yet, the fight is still on and no one should let their guard down. Understanding that even with a heightened sense of protection, we are not immune to this virus – we all share the burden of preventing the spread. In the event that you are infected, please follow the directives from your medical provider, and use the [Slow Spread COVID-19 guidelines](#) from the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) to learn how to notify your contacts to prevent the spread.

Note: Employees whom are contacted by VDH, Human Resources or directly by the COVID-19 diagnosed employee ARE NOT allowed to share any protected health information (PHI) with peers/co-workers, which is in clear violation of HIPAA regulations. The affected employee's "Health Status" is protected by law and spreading information to unauthorized personnel will result in a disciplinary action up-to termination from employment as a violation under one of these commonly violated rules:

- Impermissible disclosures of PHI
 - Unauthorized release of PHI to individuals not authorized to receive the information
 - Sharing of PHI online, via email, via text or via social media without authorization
 - Mishandling of PHI
- ◆ For more information please download the [Contact-Tracing-Infographic](#) to learn:
- What we can expect to happen during contact tracing if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19;
OR
 - What to expect if you may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- ◆ We all share a common commitment to our customers and mission, and we are also fully supportive of each other as colleagues and friends.
- *Remember that everyone's best defense is to practice good hygiene (hand washing), safe distancing (handshake-free zones), and monitor one's own health.*
 - *Stay safe, stay strong and remain resolute in your commitment to practice safe hygiene for you and your families.*
- ◆ For additional information about COVID-19, you may also call the VDH at 877-ASK-VDH3.

Use of Conference Rooms

- ◆ We have been closely following the news on the coronavirus and the changes to the CDC infectious disease prevention guidelines and assessing the impacts these updates have on our building use and visitors. With increasing rates of infection across the nation and the advent of winter and flu season, for the safety of our staff and visitors, we are returning to allowing very limited use of our facilities until at least January 15.
- ◆ Effective **November 15**, all meetings scheduled at the VDOF building will be cancelled. This will include use by building staff and other VDOF staff members. We will reassess the situation after the New Year and determine when we will again allow use of our conference facilities. If you feel you need to conduct a meeting that simply cannot be effectively done via video or teleconferencing, please contact Ed Zimmer, John Colligan or Hector Rivera to discuss an exception to the rule. If you need assistance on how to successfully conduct webinars, virtual training and/or meetings, please don't hesitate to contact Page Hutchinson.

Employee Spotlight

Congratulations Bill Sweeney and Michael Downey

- ◆ The Society of American Foresters (SAF) is a national organization of professional foresters. Their mission is to advance sustainable management of forest resources through science. Each year the Virginia Division of SAF bestows awards on members who have provided significant service to the society or the profession of forestry. This year two of VDOF's own were honored with awards:
- Michael Downey (Jefferson area forester) was named the recipient of the Young Forester Leadership Award. This award recognizes an outstanding young leader in the development and

promotion of an individual program or project, or for a sustained leadership role benefiting the practice of forestry and SAF.

- Bill Sweeney (Piedmont area forester) was named the recipient of the Virginia SAF Service Award for his prolonged service to both the society and the profession.

Congratulations to Bill and Michael for their achievements and many thanks to them for their commitment to SAF and the profession of forestry.

Employee News

2020 Virtual Jewel Award Recognition (http://bit.ly/JSA_Awards):

- ◆ Although, COVID-19 hampered this year's face-to-face award celebration, it did not stifle the efforts to celebrate those that have devoted their lives to the service of the Commonwealth and its people.
- ◆ VDOF 40-year service Honorees of the Eastern and Northern Jewel Service Virtual Event were:
 - Mr. Jim Blackwell (Waverly forest technician)
 - Mr. Ricky Butler (Heartland forester specialist)
 - Mr. Warren Coburn (Northern Neck area forester)
- ◆ To view the ceremony please go to either link below:
 - <https://www.dhrm.virginia.gov/docs/default-source/employee-programs/jsa/jewel-service-awards.mp4>
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EkRCc_sLJZE
- ◆ On behalf of the citizens and workforce of the Commonwealth, congratulations on your amazing milestone – thank you for allowing us to celebrate you!



Juneteenth Added to State Holiday Calendar

- ◆ During this summer's special session, the General Assembly passed a bill which Governor Northam has signed to establish Juneteenth (June 19 each year) as the state's 13th official holiday. Juneteenth commemorates the abolition of slavery in Texas, the last of the former Confederate states, and recognizes the significant contributions of African Americans to the Commonwealth and the nation. The [Pay and Holiday Calendar for 2021](#) has been updated. Since June 19 falls on a Saturday in 2021, it will be observed on Friday, June 18.

Employee Engagement: Native American Heritage Month in November.

- ◆ Native American Heritage Month, sometimes referred to as American Indian and Alaskan Native Heritage Month, is a time to celebrate and pay tribute to the rich heritage and the numerous contributions of Indigenous people during the month of November for which we acknowledge and celebrate the Natives of this sacred land.
- ◆ More importantly, November is an opportune time for a greater commitment to educate ourselves and the public about Indigenous tribes, acknowledge the importance of correcting historical narratives about the effects of colonization on Indigenous people, and raise awareness about the contributions made by the Indigenous people of North America.
- ◆ Native American Heritage Month had its origins as a proclamation of Native American Day, where the Friday immediately following Thanksgiving was commemorated. This eventually led to the designation

of the entire about the unique challenges of Natives both historically and present day. As an inclusive workforce, the Commonwealth pays homage to the memories and sacrifices of Native Americans and honors their active presence today.

- <https://www.commonwealth.virginia.gov/virginia-indians/state-recognized-tribes/>
- <https://www.virginia.org/virginiaindians/>
- A recent article about Indigenous people, forestry and fire: [Alarmed by Scope of Wildfires, Officials Turn to Native Americans for Help](#)

Training Opportunity

Tennessee –Kentucky (TN-KY) Academy

- ◆ The schedule for the all-virtual 2021 TN-KY Wildland Fire Academy is now posted online at: <https://gacc.nifc.gov/sacc/dc/kykic/academy/index.htm>
- ◆ All of the listed courses will be presented virtually. Any of our full-time personnel with the interest in taking a class should seek the approval of their immediate supervisor before registering. Any related expenses can be charged to CC 506. Once you're admitted into the class, please email John Miller and your immediate supervisor so that we are aware of your activities.

Last Week

State Forester

- ◆ The VDOF leadership and forest management staff met with the Virginia's new Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) leadership staff. Pictured below: Left to right, seated - Ed Zimmer (deputy state forester), Rob Farrell, Dr. Edwin Martinez (NRCS state conservationist) and Dean Cumbia (forest resource management director) L-R Standing - Terry Lasher (assistant state forester), David Kris (assistant state conservationist for water resource operations), Chad Wentz (state resource conservationist) and Todd Groh (forest resource management coordinator/forestry liaison).



- ◆ Rob Farrell spent several days visiting and working with the staff in the three VDOF work areas in Southwest Virginia. This is part of an ongoing effort to spend a day in the field with each of VDOF's 22 work area teams. Last week's visits included timber harvest inspections, visits with landowners, tours of wildfire prevention projects, and agency facility and equipment inspections in the Mount Rogers, Clinch, and Headwaters work areas.

Forestland Conservation

- ◆ Molly O'Liddy (urban & community forestry partnership coordinator) participated in S203 training to develop her skills as a Public Information Officer trainee. Molly plans to use her skills to better communicate with partners and assist in future emergency response endeavors.
- ◆ Joe Lehnert (utilization & marketing specialist) participated in the first of four Natural Areas Management Webinars (NAMS), the purpose of which is to recruit and train new service providers for the small-parcel property owner. The NAMS project is a collaboration between Penn State Extension, University of Maryland Extension, Virginia Tech Extension and the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, and VDOF. The attendance for the first session was 190.
- ◆ Terry Lasher attended the "Resilience in Virginia: Outlook 2021" webinar. The webinar discussed the recently released Coastal Resiliency Framework Document and a round robin discussion around resilience, coastal flooding and strategies to deal with climate change.

Forest Resource Management

- ◆ Katlin DeWitt (forest health specialist) attended the Blue Ridge Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) quarterly meeting on October 21 and provided a forest health update to all attendees.
- ◆ On October 23, Katlin DeWitt attended the virtual Virginia Noxious Weed Advisory Committee Meeting.
- ◆ Dean Cumbia attended the Board meeting of the Virginia Forestry Association (VFA) at the Meadow Event Center on October 21 in Caroline County. VFA is a 75-year-old private organization with the mission to represent the diverse forestry community and promote sustainable use and conservation of forest resources. The primary focus of the meeting was to work on updating the VFA Strategic Plan.

Agency Lands

- ◆ Jerre Creighton (forest research manager) participated in a virtual strategic planning/priority setting meeting with leaders of the Forest Productivity Research Cooperative. Priority subjects identified for future collaboration included: effects of volunteer pines on stand productivity and financial thresholds; hardwood productivity (in particular in response to fertilization); deployment of different genetics in mixed stands for different product objectives (interestingly, the co-op is interested in the VDOF study of that subject we installed 10 years ago); and timing of post-stand-closure hardwood control and/or fertilizer applications. These VDOF priorities will be added to the discussion when the full co-op membership convenes (virtually) in December.
- ◆ Jim Schroering (longleaf pine/southern pine beetle prevention coordinator) led the 2020 longleaf pine cone crop harvest project at the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) South Quay Natural Area Preserve during the week of October 12 and at VDOF's New Kent Forestry Center orchard on Monday, October 19. Longleaf cone production is notoriously inconsistent and 2020 validated this observation. While about 75 trees at South Quay were scouted, only 25 trees had enough cones to harvest, producing only five bushels of cones. Another three bushels were harvested at New Kent. Unfortunately this will limit the number of Virginia native longleaf seedlings produced at Garland Gray Nursery next year. A special thanks to the following individuals who helped in the collection process: Longleaf Pine Coordinator Rebecca Wilson and Southeast Region Steward Darren Loomis with the DCR Natural Heritage Program; Manij Upadhyay (area forester), Dennis Gaston (state forests forester) and Ben Duke (state forests technician).
- ◆ Jim Schroering helped to lead the 44th annual forestry extension bus tour held at Sandy Point State Forest. Coordinated by Dennis Gaston, Virginia Cooperative Extension folks and some local VDOF

foresters the 30 participants broke up into two groups, one of which was led by Lisa Deaton (area forester) and Jim - who contributed information on crop tree release, prescribed burning, longleaf pine management, stream crossings and insect attacks.

- ◆ Loblolly cone collection continues and is nearing completion. Two loads of cones have already been taken to Georgia for processing, and the final load will be shipped this week. Ones will send final summary data and report when all done. Rainfall caused the effort to start a week later than possible and cost a four-day delay in the middle of the project.
- ◆ Shannon Lewis (forest management forester) developed a potential inventory sheet to be used with the hardwood assessment tool.
- ◆ Bid opening for Channels Stands was held last Wednesday. Two bids were received, both were under our recommended minimum bid. Zach Olinger (forest management and education specialist) was able to negotiate a higher value with the high bidder of \$33,500 - which was \$5,350.00 higher than their bid. The volume sold was estimated at 462.53 MBF of Hardwood various sawtimber (White Oak, Red Oak, Yellow Poplar, etc.) plus the harvesting of pulpwood was mandatory. Markets in far Southwest Virginia continue to be challenging with limited competition, and hardly any markets for pulpwood. The Clinch Ranger District had two sales got no bid earlier this summer with both having high amounts of pulpwood.

Central Region

- ◆ On October 5 through the 8, the Virginia Prescribed Fire Council hosted an Interagency Wildland Fire Chainsaws course at the Appomattox-Buckingham State Forest. This high-demand course has limited offerings in Virginia. Chad Stover (regional fire specialist), in coordination with the Virginia Prescribed Fire Council Training Sub-Committee chose this course due to the need of the member agencies. Thirteen students from six agencies attended.

Bill Perry (forester specialist) served as the course coordinator and lead instructor. He was assisted by B.J. Butler (area forester), David Garst (Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources), Jordan Blevins (DCR) and Frank Simmons (U.S. Forest Service). Credit goes to Mike Womack (state forest forester) for use of the State Forest and to Bill Perry and his cadre of instructors for delivering a safe and educational course. Bill received many positive comments on the course evaluations, such as: "Great instructors, great class.", "Great Job. Awesome class and a lot of great instructors." Thanks again to Bill and his group for a successful class. (pictured)



- ◆ Drew Arnn (senior area forester) participated in the Brosville Elementary School Virtual Career Day. Videos were recorded using Flipgrid, answering questions regarding careers in forestry and educational paths needed for natural resources.
- ◆ Justin Barnes (deputy regional forester) participated in a Zoom meeting with the Southeast Prescribed Fire Working Group, which is part of the Southeast Prescribed Fire Initiative, to discuss prescribed fire

issues in the Southeast. Much of the discussion was on virtual meetings and how successful they have been. The group is also planning a virtual meeting with leadership from all Southeastern Prescribed Fire Councils for November to develop multi-state interactions among peers, something that was really not considered prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- ◆ Rick Butler (forester specialist) recently met with a Retired Brigadier General who is now a landowner with a mission to help area veterans. He has started the National Center for Healthy Veterans on a 350-acre parcel of land. The working farm with working forestland will help rehabilitate local veterans.
- ◆ Zoë Sumrall (forest technician) was featured in the “People of the Piedmont” section of the autumn edition of *The Piedmont Virginian* magazine. <https://piedmontvirginian.com/people-of-the-piedmont/>

Eastern Region

- ◆ Meghan Mulroy-Goldman (community forester) was invited to be a guest speaker at the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg. She presented Forest Ecology, Forest Management and Community Forestry to 16 students in a Natural History class. Dr. Linda Morse the developer of the class is a member of the Historic Rivers Master Naturalist Chapter. As a Master Naturalist, she was familiar with the work of VDOF and reached out to Meghan (a W&M alumni) to speak to her students highlighting the work that natural resource agencies do to improve our natural world.

Western Region

- ◆ David Bryan and Dylan White (forest technicians), Daniel Cloeter and Bill Sweeney (area foresters), Kevin Keith (senior area forester) and four VDOF part-time firefighters joined forces to execute a challenging 17-acre site preparation burn that was located in close proximity to a primary four-lane highway. A tornado had hit the property two years ago and a salvage harvest had taken place to remove as much timber as possible. An eastern transport wind was required for the smoke not to settle on the highway. Even with an average relative humidity of 48 percent, the fire burned extremely well, and the Burning Plan parameters were safely met. (Pictured)



- ◆ Russell Proctor (regional fire specialist), William Neff (forest technician), and Brian Ledford (area forester) assisted DCR - Natural Heritage Division with a prescribed burn in the Cedars Natural area located in Lee County. The State Parks Division and Tennessee Valley Authority also participated. (pictured)
- ◆ Cole Young (forest technician) completed bulldozer work at the Cowbane Natural Area Preserve managed by DCR. The Cowbane is located in Augusta County and features wetlands and grassland areas that are managed through prescribed fire. Cole used the dozer to install a new section of fireline to help improve mobility and safety around the burn unit.



Several hazard trees were also removed that were near the firelines. DCR is planning to conduct burning at the Cowbane in the spring.

- ◆ Mount Rogers area staff worked with the Grayson County Forestry and Agriculture committee on ways to incentivize better Forestry and Ag practices. Donnie Garman (area forester) is a long standing VDOF representative on the committee.
- ◆ Augusta Forestry Center staff were assisted by the Mountain Valley Area team to plant black walnut seeds for next year's seedling crop. Hulled walnuts are hand planted in furrows, where each nut is laid out in a line down the 300' seedling bed. The furrows are covered, rolled, and top dressed with wood chips. Unhulled walnuts are shoveled into 5-gallon buckets and laid out in the seed bed. Once the bed is completely covered, the nuts are rolled in and top dressed with wood chips. While most of the seed planted at the nursery is done using a planting machine, black walnut is one of the few species that is planted by hand. The crew planted approximately five tons of walnuts in a single day, getting all the seed into the ground. (Planting by hand pictured)



Field Notes

- ◆ [An Oak with Special Roots](#) by Patti Nylander (senior area forester)

News Clips

- ◆ [Dendra System's seed-spitting drones rebuild forests from the air.](#)
- ◆ [Something Wild: Life After Death in NH Forests.](#)
- ◆ [Ford Bronco sales to raise money for National Forest Foundation, conservation efforts.](#)
- ◆ [The Vast Impact of the Forest Landowner.](#)
- ◆ [Mobilizing to address gender in forests and climate change actions.](#)
- ◆ [Water bottles from wood materials? Poland Spring explores alternatives.](#)
- ◆ [Fireball-dropping drones and the new technology helping fight fires.](#)
- ◆ [Is Southern Yellow Pine Good for the Economy?](#)
- ◆ [WHY IS "WOOD" IN SO MANY FOODS?](#)
- ◆ [What Is Engineered Wood?](#)
- ◆ [Step aside murder hornet: How a puss caterpillar sting in Virginia took the internet by storm.](#)
- ◆ [Pandemic has slowed land conservation](#)